

# Quarterly Newsletter

January, February, March 2014

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*Preserving Soil & Water  
through Conservation*

## Frost Seeding Legumes

by Anthony Ohmes, Agronomy Specialist, University of Missouri,  
Cape Girardeau

Research has shown that investing in legumes in cool-season grass pastures will result in improved forage quality and yield while reducing overall fertilizer costs. Legumes fix atmospheric nitrogen (free N) and when legumes make up 20% to 30% of overall stand the result is little to no nitrogen required for the companion cool-season grass crop. Legumes also improve overall livestock daily gain and conception rates. Legumes help reduce the negative effects of ergovaline, the toxin produce by endophyte infected KY 31 fescue.

White (Ladino) clover is the most suited companion legume for pastures and the cheapest to spread. Other legumes include red clover and annual lespedeza. Red clover is more suited for hay production since it less tolerant to grazing than white. Annual lespedeza should be considered in the mix since its production is during summer, therefore, providing some feed when cool-season grass and clover production tends decrease.

The window for frost seeding legumes is typically February. Later planting will reduce overall success of establishment since it is the freezing and thawing action of the soil that moves seed into the soil/seed zone. In some seasons such as 2012, January was more suitable due to unseasonable warm weather in February. So the timing window may vary slightly season to season. Seeding rates for ladino clover, red clover and annual lespedeza are 2 lbs/A, 10 lbs/A, and 25 lbs/A of pure live seed, respectively. Also, it is important to consider inoculating clover seed to insure good nodulation especially in fields where legumes have not been in the mix for some time.

For more information on frost seeding legumes into existing pasture contact your local MU Extension Center and ask for guides G4651 and G4652, "Renovating Grass Sods with Legumes" and "Seeding Rates, Dates, and Depths for Common Missouri Forages" or find them on the web: <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G4651> and <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G4652>.

## Winter... a Good Time to Test for Radon

MARSHFIELD, Mo.— While you wait for the spring thaw, consider testing your home for harmful radon gas, says Bob Schultheis, a University of Missouri Extension Natural Resource Engineering Specialist.

Radon is a naturally occurring gas produced by the breakdown of radium and uranium in rocks and soils. Long-term exposure to high levels of radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer, and the leading cause among nonsmokers. Radon enters the home through cracks and openings in floors and walls, and through floor drains and sumps. Energy-efficient or poorly ventilated homes are more likely to have higher radon levels, Schultheis noted. "Testing in Missouri has shown that all counties have radon, and 18 percent of all homes have radon levels above the level considered dangerous," he said. (continued on page 3)



## Iron County Soil & Water Conservation District

### Cost-Share Program

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Soil & Water Conservation District Commission has developed the cost-share program to provide financial incentives to help farmers and landowners install erosion-control practices. The program has helped conserve and assure the continued productivity of Missouri's soil and water resources, saving an estimated 137 million tons of soil. The cost-share program provides in excess of \$20 million annually to Missouri landowners. Approximately 6,000 practices are completed each year on agricultural land to reduce or abate soil erosion. A variety of practices are eligible to treat highly erodible cropland or to convert it to pasture or hayland.

Cost-share is provided for up to 75 percent of all necessary costs incurred by the landowner. Such costs may include machinery hire, needed materials delivered to and used at the site and labor required to install the practice (including any fair and reasonable costs incurred by the landowner in furnishing his own labor and equipment).

Districts are organized and operated by local citizens who promote protection, maintenance, improvement and wise use of the soil and water resources in their counties. Districts also inform landowners about soil conservation programs.

### Who Qualifies for Cost-Share?

Owners of private farmland within the established soil and water conservation district are eligible for cost-share funds. The landowner must have an active conservation plan approved by the district. A conservation plan outlines a landowner's decision on how to most effectively use his land and how to maintain or improve the soil, water and related resources.

The list of eligible projects and practices consists of various proven soil and water conservation techniques identified by the Soil & Water Districts Commission. A list of practices offered by the Iron County SWCD can be found at [www.swcd.mo.gov/iron](http://www.swcd.mo.gov/iron)

Below are a few cost-share practices that we are spotlighting.

### Critical Area Seeding

The purpose of a critical area seeding is to establish permanent vegetation where needed on sites that have high erosion rates and/or conditions that prevent the establishment of vegetation with normal practices. In so doing, one stabilizes areas with existing high rates of soil erosion caused by water or wind by rehabilitating and vegetating naturally degraded sites that can't be stabilized through normal farming practices. It is also available for animal confinement areas or those areas with continued access. Eligibility for this practice is based on sheet & rill erosion or gully erosion.

### Water Impoundment Reservoir

The purpose of this practice is to stabilize the grade and control gully erosion in natural or artificial channels. This practice applies to agricultural land where the concentration and flow velocity of water requires a water impoundment reservoir to stabilize the grade in channels or to control gully erosion not contained in dense forest cover. For the purpose of this practice, CRP land surrounding the water impoundment reservoir site is considered agricultural land.

Cost-Share is limited to one livestock watering tank or hydrant or limited access watering point. A supply pipe may also be installed in addition to a limited access watering point. Cost-Share is limited to 300 feet of pipe from the dam to the livestock watering facility. To qualify for Cost-Share, a livestock watering facility must be installed during construction. Exclusion fence is required if installing a livestock watering tank or hydrant. Eligibility for this practice is based on gully erosion.

### Things to Look for in Replacement Heifers

**By Kendra Graham, Livestock Specialist, University of Missouri Extension, St. Francois County**

Replacement heifers are one of the most important investments for a cattle producer. The heifers you keep or buy to replace your old cows should be with you for a long time. There are several traits you should look for in a heifer to ensure she will be productive. Reproductive capabilities are extremely important for a replacement heifer. A heifer unable to breed or not able to have a healthy calf is only costing the producer money. One way to check for reproductive traits is a pelvic measurement and a reproductive tract score. Pelvic measurements measure the pelvic area to estimate how heavy of a calf a heifer can have without assistance. For example, a 12-13 month old 600 lb. heifer with a pelvic area of 160 cm<sup>2</sup> can have a 76 lb. calf. Reproductive tract scores measure if a heifer is cycling and will be able to breed. It is recommended that a heifer have a pelvic score of 150 cm<sup>2</sup> or above 30 days before breeding or a score of 180 cm<sup>2</sup> or above at first pregnancy check. A tract score of 3 or higher is recommended for heifers 30 days prior to breeding.

Vaccinations should also be important when looking for replacement heifers. Vaccinations not only ensure the heifer is guarded against disease, but also allows that immunity to be passed to the calf early in life. (continued on page 3)

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Soil test kits are available through the Extension office

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## Soil Savers Corner

### For the Birds



After a long and cold winter, spring is just around the corner. Help out your neighborhood birds by making a nesting materials bag. Use a net bag—the kind onions come in—and fill it with short bits of yarn or string, the hair that you brush off the dog, and straw. The birds will appreciate the help!

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When you walk to the school bus or through the yard to get to the mailbox, you are walking on living organisms.

Just ONE TEASPOON of soil can hold between 100 million and 1 billion bacteria and other organisms. Soil comes from broken up pieces of rock and dead leaves, tree limbs, and dead bugs and other things that decompose.

### (Radon...continued from page 1)

The radon levels can vary greatly from one home to the next, so the Environmental Protection Agency recommends all homes be tested for radon.

Winter is a good time for testing because doors and windows need to be kept closed as much as possible during a radon test.

Missouri residents can get a free radon test kit from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services ([www.health.mo.gov/living/environment/radon/testkit.php](http://www.health.mo.gov/living/environment/radon/testkit.php)). Low-cost kits are also available from hardware stores and home improvement centers. These test kits are typically placed in the lowest lived-in level of the house for two to seven days, and then mailed to a lab for analysis. Depending on the lab, you might receive test results by mail or access them online.

While there is no level of radon that is considered absolutely “safe,” the EPA has set an “action level” of 4 picocuries per liter of air (“curie” is a unit of measure for radioactivity). If your house tests at 4 pCi/L or higher, EPA recommends a second, long-term test—three to 12 months—to verify the initial results.

If you decide you need to take action on radon in your house, take the time to carefully evaluate your options, Schultheis said. The dangers of radon come from long-term exposure—years, even decades. Sometimes fixing the problem may be as simple as sealing cracks in the foundation, he said. In other cases, reducing radon to acceptable levels might involve installing a system that uses a vent pipe and fan to pull radon from under the foundation and vent it through the roof.

For more information:

Radon (Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services):

[health.mo.gov/living/environment/radon](http://health.mo.gov/living/environment/radon) or call toll-free 866-628-9891

National Radon Action Month: [www.epa.gov/radon.nram](http://www.epa.gov/radon.nram)

“Radon: An Indoor Health Hazard?” (MU Extension guide), available at MU Extension

## Iron County 4-H News

Shooting sports now has instructors in archery, pistol, shot gun, rifle and muzzle loaders, and our members are practicing hard for the state shoot later this summer. Our cooking project members made spaghetti and hot dog ‘octopus’ for lunch, and cookies for their dessert. Woodworking is also on the club schedule with plans for birdhouses and feeders. 4-H is open to all kids ages 5-18, and enrollment is open. (Shooting sports project is limited to those kids who have taken 4-H safety training or hunter education class.)

Iron County 4-H Club has a number of kids who are interested in **livestock projects**. We need caring adults with experience with cattle, sheep, swine and poultry to help these kids learn. If you are interested in helping out with livestock projects and a 4-H livestock show sometime next summer, please call Debra Henk, 4-H Youth Specialist. The Extension Office phone number is 574-546-7515, or you can visit the office on the third floor of the courthouse.

### (Heifers...continued from page 2)

The common vaccinations to look for are IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV, 7-way clostridia, Vibrio, and 5-way Lepto. Calfhood vaccination against Brucellosis (Bangs) is also recommended even though Missouri is a Brucellosis-free state. Frame, muscling, structural soundness, disposition, weight, and general appearance should also play a role in heifer selection.

The heifer is not the only thing you should take into consideration when looking for replacement animals. The bull you use plays a big part in what type, size and breed of animal you choose. If the bull is large and tends to throw heavy calves, you may want to buy large frame, heavy heifers to avoid calving problems, or get a different bull. Heifers are much smaller than cows and should be bred to a calving-ease bull to help ensure a healthy calf and no internal damage to the heifer. When selecting heifers keep in mind that you are making an investment in your herd and want to choose animals that will give you a return on that investment, even if it means spending more money at the beginning.

## Upcoming Grazing School

Grazing School will be coming to Mineral Area College on May 6th & 7th. For more information and registration, please call Selma Mascaro at 573-224-3410 x 3 or by e-mail at: [selma.mascaro@mo.usda.gov](mailto:selma.mascaro@mo.usda.gov)

For a complete list of upcoming classes, visit: <http://agebb.missouri.edu/mfgc/schools.htm>

## SEMO Bull Sale

The 74th SEMO Bull Sale will be held Friday, March 28, 2014 starting at 7 p.m. in the Farmington Livestock Auction barn. 25 bulls will be available for sale including 12 Angus, 6 Simmental, 1 Gelbvieh and 6 Charolais. Catalogs will be available through your local

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\*4-H News  
\*Frost Seeding Legumes  
\*Replacement Heifers  
\*Cost-Share Program

Extension office and can also be found at [www.semobeef.com](http://www.semobeef.com). If you have any questions you can contact the sale manager, Darrell Aufdenberg, at (573) 270-6755.

## Missouri Regains #2 in Cow Numbers, as National Herd Size Continues Decline

By Duane Dailey, Senior Writer, University of Missouri Cooperative Media Group

COLUMBIA, MO - Missouri returned as No. 2 beef cow state in the nation, with a 63,000-cow increase in 2013. The USDA cow count shows Missouri rose from No. 3 back to the position it held from 1983 to 2008. The state has 1.82 million cows, down from more than 2 million in 2008. The annual U.S. Department of Agriculture inventory shows Missouri to be one of only three states to grow herd size by more than 50,000 cows.

In 2013, Kansas went up 86,000 cows. Oklahoma grew by 51,000. Arkansas rose 31,000, making it fourth-fastest-growing cow state in the nation. Texas remains No. 1, with 3.91 million head. In a long-term drought, Texas cow numbers dropped 1.1 million head from the 2011 USDA report.

Nebraska, which had been No. 2 for two years, dropped to No. 4, with Oklahoma No. 3 in beef cow numbers. In contrast, 37 states declined or held steady at 2013 levels, says Daniel Madison, research economist at the University of Missouri Division of Applied Social Sciences. Nationally, the cow herd continued declining, losing 255,000 head in 2013. The U.S. herd now has 29 million cows, the lowest level since 1962.

Observers anticipate an upturn in cow numbers. Declining beef supply brought sharp increases in cattle prices. Meanwhile, sharp drops in feed prices give economic signals for higher profits. That should lead to rebuilding the cow herd. However, droughts and doubts about grass and hay supplies cause caution for herd owners nationally. Dry weather continues in parts of the United States.

"The economics seem to be in place for future growth in the beef cow numbers," says Scott Brown, MU Beef Economist. "Missouri producers see those signals," he says. "Heifers retained in the herd are an indicator of optimism." Nationally, 1.7 percent more heifers are in the inventory over 2013. In Missouri, heifers are up 5.2 percent.

"Unlike the last few years, feed price projections are more promising for anyone raising cattle," Brown adds. "Feedlots are selling fed cattle at prices never seen before. Now that their feed bills are dropping, they pay more for feeder calves. They want to refill their lots."

The strongest developing trend in cattle prices is higher premiums for quality beef. "The biggest premiums are paid for USDA prime grade cattle," Brown says. "Missouri producers in the Quality Beef by the Numbers program gain current high market price, plus grid premiums in some cases of hundreds of dollars. However, more than economics are in play," he adds. "Drought continues to be a concern. California and Nevada herds are being reduced because of lack of water and grass." According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, conditions ranging from abnormally dry to moderate drought cover a swath from northern Missouri through Iowa to southern Minnesota.